BRIEFER ARTICLES.

On the derivation of Linnæan specific names.—At page 360 (July issue) of *Popular Science Monthly*, is a paper by Dr. John P. Lotsy on "Herbaria in their relation to botany." While the paper has much of value, it rather underrates the services of those who can name at sight any plant presented to them, which, the author says, was "what was understood as a botanist in Linnæus' time." Morphology, histology, and physiology he regards as of greater importance. There seems no necessity for depreciating the study of systematic botany in order to elevate the other branches. The best proof of this is the fact that most of the ablest workers in these fields, are distinguished as systematists.

But the point I have in view in this note is to call attention to a very excusable error, into which Dr. Lotsy has fallen, that Linnæus is the *originator* of the so-called Linnæan names. He "resolved" says Dr. L., "to give every plant two names, the first one being the genus name, here Ranunculus, the second one expressing some particular kind of Ranunculus, and thus indicating the species. Thus he found, for example, that one buttercup had an acrid taste, and he called it the acrid buttercup in Latin, *Ranunculus acris;* that another one only grew in marshy places, he called it the marsh buttercup, in Latin *Ranunculus palustris*, etc."

A study of the work of Linnæus shows that when he took in hand to reduce the labors of his predecessors to a binomial system, he usually adopted some one of the specific terms already employed by them—frequently the last term, whatever that might be, or even though it might be on general principles inappropriate. Whenever there was no opportunity to make use of terms already in use for his specific names, his choice seemed to be geographical ones. The genus Ranunculus, already introduced by Dr. L. furnishes a good illustration of this. He did not "find that one buttercup had an acrid taste, and he called it" Ranunculus acris, for Bauhin had "found" this long before. He had styled it *Ranunculus pratensis erectus acris.* All Linnæus did was to strike out all but the first and last words of the sentence. In some cases he adopted the generic names of his predecessors for his specific names. Dodonæus, for instance, had a genus Flammula, represented by our *Ranunculus Flammula* as Linnæus reduced it. *Ranunculus reptans*, was the *R. foliis linearibus caule repente* of his early "Flora Lapponica." *R. gramineus* was Bau-

hin's *R. montanus gramineofolio.* *R. parnassifolius* was Tournefort's *R. montanus graminis parnassifolio.* *R. bullatus* is Bauhin's *R. latifolius bullatus.* Unfortunately for Dr. L.'s illustration he never established a *R. palustris.* There was, to be sure, Bauhin's "*R. palustris apiifolio lævis,*" but for once he ignored both the swamp and the smooth parsley leaf, and dubbed it *R. Sceleratus.* Thus we might go through the whole list of the Linnæan ranunculuses. *Ophioglossoides* is from Villars, *Ficaria* from Haller, *Thora* from Crantz, *Creticus* from Bauhin, *cassubicus* from Breyne, *aconitifolius* from Bauhin, *rutæfolius* from Bauhin, and so on of many others, a large number being Bauhin's names.

In the reorganization of systematic botany, Linnæus was a collator and condenser, rather than a creator, and the fact that, as far as possible, he preserved the work of his predecessors, and did all honor to their labors, justifies the high estimation of his personal character so generally entertained.—THOMAS MEEHAN, *Germantown, Philadelphia.*

A day-blooming Cereus grandiflorus.—Our Cereus grandiflorus has, on three occasions and with five different blossoms, made a fatal and in no instance entirely successful effort to expand during the day. In each case the abortive attempt was caused by a sudden marked lowering of temperature *when the bud was almost ready to open*, thus retarding the growth.

In the first instance, a year ago, the flower partly opened about 8:00 A. M. on the second day after it had to all appearances planned to expand had external conditions proved favorable. It soon drooped, however, as the sun's rays fell upon it.

This year the cold wave early in July, with mercury at 44° at 7 A. M., and but little higher at mid-day, caught two fine buds in a similar manner. Again expansion was retarded at least one, and, I am inclined to think, two days and several odd hours. They opened sufficiently to show the interior at 10:00 A. M. and 11:00 A. M. respectively, and like their abnormal predecessor soon drooped in the sunshine (the plant stands on a south porch), and did not revive with the approach of twilight as a friend fondly hoped.

Again, Aug. 1st, two other buds similarly retarded behaved in the same way. The day was cool and cloudy. At 9:00 A. M. the sepals of one had loosened at the tip. From 9:30 to nearly 10:00 o'clock the phenomena that attend the normal opening of this beautiful flower were present. At 10:00 A. M. the maximum was seemingly reached. The petals were then open nearly as wide as is their custom, the outer sepals, instead of bending back almost to the tube, opened at nearly a right angle with it; the stigma, as in all previous abortive ef-